## THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

# QUARTERLY

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Merle Armitage and Edward Weston: The Making of Two Books & Anne Wilkes Tucker

Exhibit In A Book & Deirdre Donohue

Experimental Photobooks in Los Angeles: Cynthia Marsh and Rachel Youdelman & Tony White

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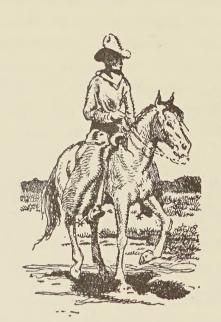
# From the Supervising Editor

RECENTLY I PICKED UP A Rendezvous with the Book by the legendary designer Merle Armitage at a second-hand bookstore. I realized I knew little about Armitage but I have admired his book design since I first stumbled into it some decades ago. Luckily for all of us, Anne Wilkes Tucker provides us with fascinating details of Armitage's storied life in her essay that places Armitage's work alongside the legendary photographer Edward Weston. Specifically, Tucker describes the designer's work to produce The Art of Edward Weston, right down to the type of ink Armitage sought to best amplify Weston's remarkable photographs.

To ensure that the work of Armitage, Weston and the other artists and designers highlighted in this issue of the Quarterly, is best represented, it includes our first-ever photo insert. Guest editor Jon Evans of the library and archives at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, has gathered four wide-ranging essays that explore books with photographs at their cores. In addition to now iconic photographic books such as Weston's, the issue also explores the photobook, generally seen as an experimental work that uses photos as the central conceptual element of the book. Peter Blank, head of the newly established Mark Ruwedel Archive at Stanford University, outlines a few of Ruwedel's books and photos from this archive, many of which pay homage to conceptual artists like Ed Ruscha, walking artists like Hamish Fulton and Richard Long and the iconic photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher. And Tony White, associate chief librarian at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, highlights the work of two experimental artists in Los Angeles in the 1970s, Cynthia Marsh and Rachel Youdelman. Marsh's work from 1975, The Sporting Life, is a proud part of my own library.

Finally, we are treated to the production history of the books from one of California's own legendary institutions, the Sierra Club, and its long-time head, David Brower. Deirdre Donohue, managing research librarian of the Wallach Collection, New York Public Library, gives us the fascinating story of the *Exhibit Format* series that Brower spearheaded, in the process changing aspects of book design that remain very contemporary today.

Once again we must thank the indefatigable Robert McCamant for his visionary idea of adding photos to the otherwise beautifully letterpressed *Quarterly*, and for bringing Jon Evans on board to collect these fascinating essays.



## The Life and Times of

## **Iconic Artist of the American West**

By Peter Hiller Edited and with a Foreword by Gail Jones Afterword by Gary F. Kurutz

An essential addition to any collection of Western art and Americana, *The Life and Times of Jo Mora* provides an in-depth portrait of this gifted illustrator, painter, writer, cartographer, and sculptor (1876-1947). Author and Mora scholar Peter H. Hiller interweaves fascinating biographical material with Mora's personal letters, journal entries and other writings – many never before seen by the public – to provide an intimate study of a significant yet often overlooked artist.

The Life and Times of Jo Mora: Iconic Artist of the American West is designed and letterpress printed by Norman Clayton of Classic Letterpress in Ojai, California, with the assistance of Molly Dedmond, and hand bound by Klaus Rötzscher of Pettingell Book Bindery in Berkeley, California.

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# Merle Armitage and Edward Weston: The Making of Two Books

Anne Wilkes Tucker

MERLE ARMITAGE AND EDWARD WESTON were significantly different in personality, professions, lifestyles, and income. They both moved to California as adults and shared a passion for, and strong opinions about, modern art in all its media. When they met in the mid 1920s, Armitage was just past thirty and enjoying his reputation as an impresario of operas, plays, and concerts that featured internationally recognized talents, some of whom owed their careers to Armitage. Weston was approaching forty and supporting his wife and four sons as a portrait photographer while also exhibiting his fine art photographs in venues ranging from local bookstores to international venues. Weston was radically changing the content and aesthetic style of his photographs. Armitage would soon undertake a second profession as a book designer, assuming responsibility for conceiving, writing and designing his projects with his distinctive style. One of the first books Armitage would publish was Weston's first monograph, *The Art of Edward Weston* (1932)[PLATE 1], bringing together two careers that would continue to intertwine for decades.

Edward Weston's first photograph was made in a Chicago city park at age 16. Only four years later, he was confident that he was to become an artist of historical importance, but it took almost two decades for him to make the first images that led to the recognition he passionately desired. In his early years in Los Angeles, his non-commercial images were romantic, sometimes sentimental, and even silly. He staged scenes, used soft-focus lenses, and dressed himself as "an artiste" in Windsor ties and a green velvet jacket. By the late nineteen-tens, his fine art images were primarily portraits of friends with dramatic light-and-shadow effects that often bisected the sitters' faces and bodies. Other models posed beneath sharply angled attic walls, were dressed in capes and oriental garb, or were almost incidental to other elements in the composition. Graphically bold, and sometimes quite beautiful, they lacked the individual insight that would later identify Weston's mature works. The changes that announced Weston's mature style developed rapidly in the early 1920s.

As a child, Weston attended art exhibitions and operas in Chicago with his aunt. In Los Angeles he continued to attend cultural events, questioning what

<sup>1]</sup> Merle Armitage. Accent on Life. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1965), 237. Armitage wrote in his biography Accent on Life that they met in 1920 at a party given by Arthur Millier, but Millier did not move to Los Angeles until 1922 and Armitage moved there in 1924. Since he also mentions Weston's forthcoming trip to Mexico with his son Brett, they likely met in 1925.

he read or saw relative to his own ambitions. A source of challenging ideas that was especially valued by readers without ready access to New York was the cultural arts magazine *The Dial*, in which Weston read an article by art critic Paul Rosenfeld. <sup>2</sup> In the essay, the images by the New York photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz were praised to the extent that Rosenthal claimed Stieglitz to be uniquely able to "fix the visual moments, register what lies between himself and the object before his lens at a given moment of time." <sup>3</sup> All other photographers, continued Rosenfeld, "have been concerned not so much with the object, with the moments, as they have with the making of an 'artistic photograph.'" Rosenfeld's emphasis on Stieglitz's interpretative expression, rather than on making a record or making 'Art,' raised the possibility that pictures made with a camera could be personally expressive just as images were by other visual artists. Moved by the review, Weston accepted that posing as an artist and working within the boundaries set by others would not achieve his goal of making revolutionary images.

In 1922 Weston's sister funded a critical trip to New York for Weston to meet Stieglitz and other contemporary photographers, including the artist and photographer Charles Sheeler. He became a friend and wrote for Weston's first monograph. As artists do, they shared their images and their responses to each other's portfolios, with Stieglitz's views being the most influential. Modern paintings as well as collections of antiquity at the Metropolitan and Brooklyn Museums also shifted his photographic direction. Evaluating the trip later, Weston recognized that photographs he made at the Armco Steel plant near his sister's home were another critical advance. <sup>4</sup> This was his first venture into photographing machinery and industrial structures, subjects already addressed by many of his contemporaries in their search for modernity.

The intensity of his meetings and his museum experiences in New York were pivotal in redirecting his artistic vision as were Weston's more challenging and extended trips to Mexico, made between 1923 and 1926. On the first trip he traveled with his eldest son Chandler and his lover, the photographer Tina Modotti. Through her contacts and cultural networking, he met painters Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and other leading figures of the Mexican Renaissance. The impact of being in a different culture, being able to focus primarily on making photographs of his choosing, the encouragement he

<sup>2]</sup> Paul Rosenfeld, "Stieglitz," *The Dial* 70, no. 4 (1921): 397-409, https://books.google.com/books? id=Is1PAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false.

<sup>3]</sup> Rosenfeld quoted in Amy Conger, "Biography" in Edward Weston: Photographs from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography. (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona, 1992), 7.

<sup>4]</sup> Edward Weston. The Daybooks of Edward Weston. Vol. 1, Mexico. Edited by Nancy Newhall. (Rochester, NY: The George Eastman House, 1973), 8.

received from those he met, and the impact of well-received exhibitions of his work led to his pursuing new subjects, approaches and genre. For the first time, he photographed clouds, landscapes, folk art, toys, and ordinary household utilities, having realized that he could make art with vernacular objects. He made head-shot portraits with a psychological depth which he had not previously achieved as well as nude studies of Tina Modotti and various other female friends and models. He intervened less in his subjects' poses once he chose a location for the sitting. His images increasingly became straightforward views that were masterfully exposed and printed to maximize the expression of what he had seen and felt at the moment of exposure. Whenever possible, he used his 8 x 10 view camera to capture minute details and full tonal range that were critical to what he envisioned. Or, as Weston wrote: "Unless I pull a technically fine print from a technically fine negative, the emotional or intellectual value of the photograph is for me almost negated, no matter how fine the original feeling and impulse." 5 As Weston wrote in his second year in Mexico, "The camera should be used for a recording of life, for rendering the very substance and quintessence of the thing itself, whether polished steel or palpitation flesh," <sup>6</sup>The photographs from three pivotal trips as well as the still lives, portraits and nude studies that Weston made upon his return to California were the mature style for which he became internationally appreciated and which Merle Armitage featured in the 1932 monograph on Weston.

From an early age in Mason City, Iowa, all forms of design engaged Armitage, particularly trains and ships. After serving in the Navy during World War I, he worked as a graphic designer for the Packard Motor Car Company in Detroit. He also worked as a theatrical set designer in New York. This evolved into a partnership in a business that managed the careers of dancers, opera singers, and opera and ballet companies as well as organizing and promoting tours to major cities in America. One tour averaged a performance a day, usually in a different city, for 31 days. Armitage's many talents included a magnetic attraction to cultural shifts — composers who identified new structures for sounds that had been thought to be formless, visual artists who radically reshaped traditional forms to new purposes, and dancers who reimagined how bodies could invigorate space. Igor Stravinsky and Martha Graham were among the revolutionaries whose tours he managed. Armitage's responsibility was to present the artists to new audiences. That potential audiences might not have previously heard or seen the performers made these tours harder to promote, which never seemed to daunt the impresario. Armitage's own measure of suc-

<sup>5]</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>6]</sup> Ibid., 55. Quoted Edward Weston Photographer: The Flame of Recognition. Ed by Nancy Newhall. (Rochester NY: Aperture, 1965), 10.

cess was not solely monetary; he wanted the public to accept new aesthetic values. Various writers have attributed Armitage's successes as a promoter to his ability to charm, threaten, flatter and cajole. Armitage attributed his success to his understanding and respect for the talent that he represented, as well as his respect for American audiences' tolerance of "the new," if properly approached. He also emphasized the critical role of focused graphic design for each tour, and later for each book. "As an impresario," Armitage wrote, "I came to realize that all promotional printed matter for the tours must reflect the quality of the performer not only in the text, but also in the design. Soon I found myself laying out every piece of printing concerned with any concert, opera or ballet season. Design, space relations, and their power of communication, early became working problems, not theories." 7

His attraction to art began at an early age, encouraged by his mother, who also challenged him to collect prints and drawings by saving his lunch money and paying with installments. Once he was employed, his collection focused on artists ranging from European masters such as Francisco Goya and Albrecht Dürer to American artists George Bellows and Arthur B. Davies. Ultimately, he acquired rare impressions of prints by Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gaugin, Paul

7] Merle Armitage. Notes on Modern Printing. (New York: Wm. E. Rudge's Sons, 1945), 12.

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605 Addison Street : Berkeley, CA 94710 415.989.2665 866.999.7224 www.pbagalleries.com Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky. He continued to purchase works on installment, sending payments from around the globe.

In sharp contrast to Armitage, Weston lived with extraordinary simplicity to minimize what he had to earn for his family, thus freeing time to make pictures of his own standards. For Weston, expenditures such as purchasing art, much less items many would regard as essential, were beyond his perennial financial situation. He was dependent on obtaining commercial portrait commissions and selling his prints for the modest price of \$15. 8 Having a few patrons who seriously collected his work was a blessing, but it was not dependably sustaining. In 1938, he finally achieved a permanent home by using \$1,200 from his Guggenheim Fellowship for his son Neil to build a very modest house and studio in the Carmel Highlands on land given to him and his second wife Charis by her father.

Armitage settled in Los Angeles in 1924 to become the co-founder of the Los Angeles Grand Opera Association, as well as its business manager for eight seasons. He then managed the Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium from 1933 to 1939, while also maintaining his partnership in the touring business. He began writing and designing books in 1929, or as he expressed it, he consummated "a plan which had long been germinating: to write and publish books on contemporary leaders of the cultural world." 9 Over the next three decades, while continuing his jobs at the Opera, and then, at the Philharmonic Auditorium, he produced over one hundred books that were written and designed, designed with an essay by, or designed by Armitage. Over half were conceived by him and recognized as "A Merle Armitage Book." After World War II, Armitage designed the opening titles for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films, working with the production designer Cedric Gibbons. In 1947, he returned to New York for six years to radically redesign Look magazine. During these years, Armitage worked on book projects every weekend, referring to creating books as his avocation. The editions were small; the goal was to break even.

Some of Armitage's books were monographs about the artists whose works he had collected — Picasso, Klee, and Rockwell Kent, or musicians and dancers for whom he had organized tours — Stravinsky, Graham, Arnold Schoenberg, and George Gershwin. He met other artists when he was the Regional Director of Public Works of Art Project of Southern California in 1934. <sup>10</sup> The artists represented in two monographs — Richard Day and Warren Newcombe,

<sup>8]</sup> Conger, "Biography" in Edward Weston: Photographs from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, 23. When an accident occurred while his son Brett was horseback riding with Armitage and the Monterey hospital demanded payment in advance of treatment, Edward's friends, including Armitage, sent contributions, promised loans, and offered credit against future photographic purchases.

<sup>9]</sup> Armitage, Notes on Modern Printing, 1.

<sup>10]</sup> Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, figure 578 (1929). Arthur Millier, Weston and Armitage worked together on the PWAP.

worked for Hollywood studios, although both were initially known in the art world for their lithographs, such as those featured in Armitage's books. <sup>11</sup> Other Armitage books addressed new aesthetic movements — *So Called Abstract Art* (1939), *Modern Dance* (1935) and *Books for Our Times* (1951). <sup>12</sup>

Day, Newcombe, and Weston's books were among the first five that Armitage masterminded in 1932. All were published by E. Weyhe, Inc., a legendary bookstore and gallery in New York with whom Armitage collaborated on fourteen books. Throughout his career, he tended to find a publisher and work with that company consistently as he did after World War II with Duell, Sloan and Pearce, which published twelve of his books. Duell, Sloan and Pearce published *Fifty Photographs: Edward Weston* (1947), Armitage's second book on Weston, whereas Weyhe published the monograph of the photographs of Edward's son, Brett in 1956.

Armitage's engagement in the book making process varied from complete control to solely that of designer. No detail in *The Art of Edward Weston* (1932) escaped Armitage's notice or Weston's approval. *In Notes on Modern Printing*, Armitage concentrated on the exacting technical processes selected particularly for this book:

"Long before I considered designing books, I had known the work of Edward Weston, so a Weston book was inevitable. It would have been disastrous to present the photographs of Edward Weston in a book that was a compromise. Our first step, therefore was to order a special coated paper [early high-gloss] to be manufactured for this particular book, and in addition, to experiment for months with a deep-etched half-tones of a very fine screen <sup>13</sup>.... A large fat Bodoni [type] was used for the text, as nothing less would live against the boldness of Weston's work; and an expansive feeling throughout each page was attempted. A special cover of a black, shiny synthetic material juxtaposed with a white [vertical] band on which the title was printed, gave the book a striking binding ... yet kept within the tonal range of the photographs themselves." <sup>14</sup>

- II] Warren Newcombe won two Academy Awards for special effects, one of which was for the movie *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* (1944). Richard Day won seven Academy Awards for art direction. His last award was for *On the Waterfront* (1954).
- 12] Mary Wigman, Martha Graham, and Charles Weidman. *Modern Dance*. Designed by Merle Armitage. Compiled by Virginia Stewart. (New York: E. Weyhe, 1935) Weston's photograph of Harald Kreutzberg was published in *Modern Dance*.
- 13] The half-tones were made by the Los Angeles Engraving company under the supervision of Charles Benson. The Will A. Kistler Company printed the book under the direction of Lynton Kistler. The paper was Artisan enamel, manufactured by the Champion Paper Company. The text was hand set in 18 point-recut Bodoni especially cast from Monotype mats. The ink was made by Hostmann-Steinberg Farbenfabriken. The Binding was by Earle A. Gray. Title page and initials hand lettered by William Stultz.
- 14] Armitage, Notes on Modern Printing, 22, 27.

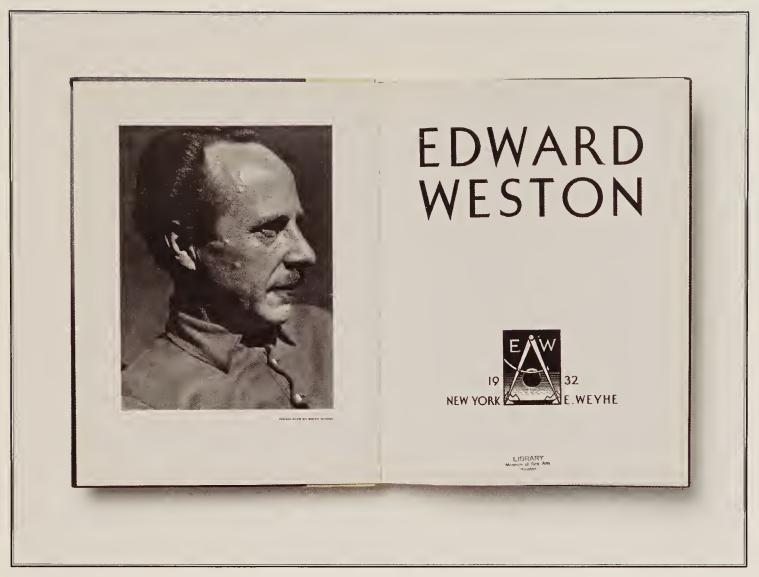


PLATE I Merle Armitage and Edward Weston. *The Art of Edward Weston* (1932). Frontispiece featuring portrait of Edward Weston by Brett Weston and title page. Image: Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; photographs by Will Michels.

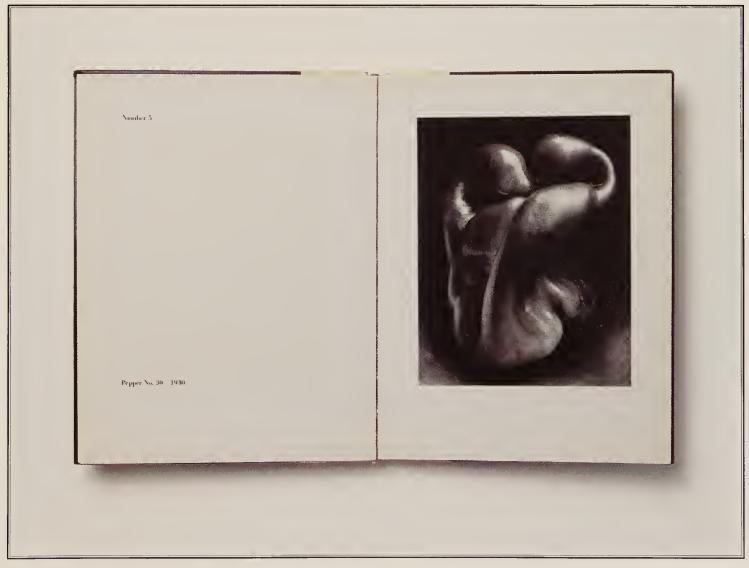


PLATE 2 Merle Armitage and Edward Weston. *The Art of Edward Weston* (1932). *Pepper No.* 30 (1930) page spread. Image: Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; photographs by Will Michels.

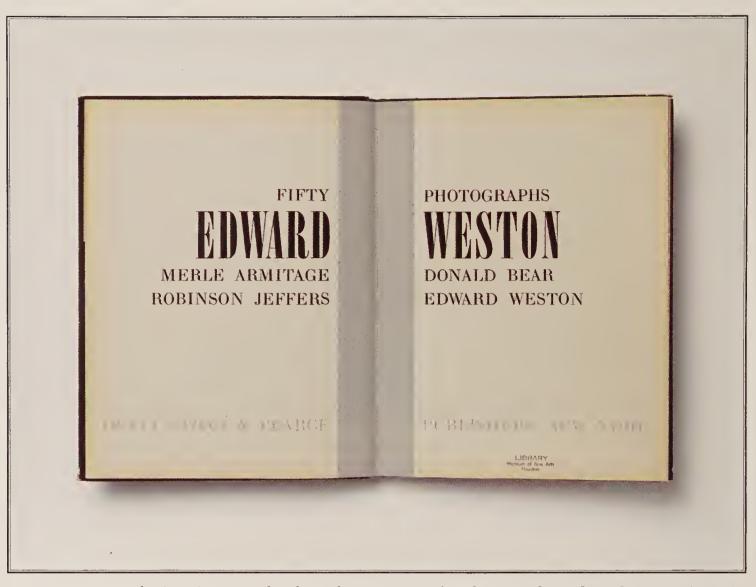


PLATE 3 Merle Armitage and Edward Weston. *Fifty Photographs: Edward Weston* (1947). Title page double-page spread. Image: Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; photographs by Will Michels.

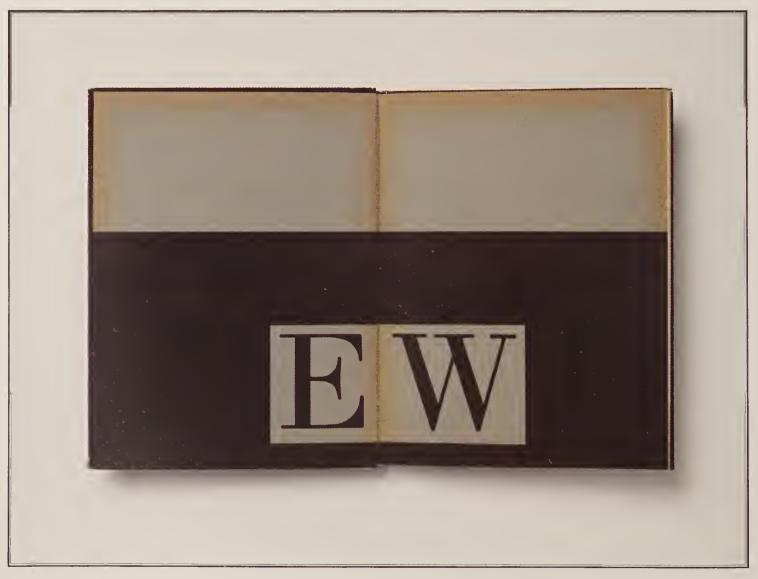


PLATE 4 Merle Armitage and Edward Weston. *Fifty Photographs: Edward Weston* (1947). End papers. Image: Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; photographs by Will Michels.



PLATE 5 Selection of the Sierra Club *Exhibit Format* books from various divisions of the New York Public Library. Image: Christian Erroi.



PLATE 6 Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall. *This Is The American Earth* (1960). Double-page spread featuring Ansel Adams's *Sierra Nevada from Lone Pine*, *California*. Text and photographs © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. Image: Christian Erroi.



PLATE 7 Robinson Jeffers. *Not Man Apart* (1965). Frontispiece featuring Ansel Adams's *Point Sur* and title page. Ansel Adams photographs copyright © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. Image: Christian Erroi.

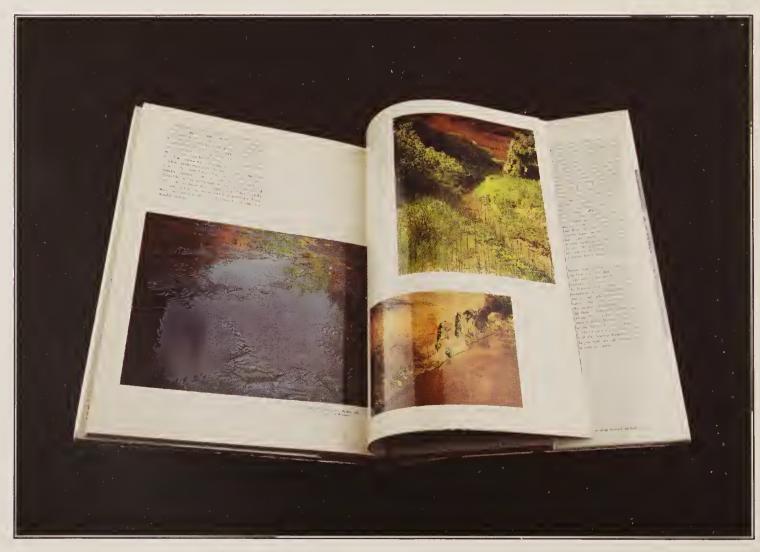


PLATE 8 François Leydet. *Time and the River Flowing: Grand Canyon* (1964). Double-page spread featuring photographs by David Brower; text and photographs © Sierra Club. Image: Christian Erroi.

A thick, true black ink was ordered from Europe, but it would not coat evenly on the etching plate or the page. A pressman's solution was to set the plates on fire so that the ink both flowed into the cuts on the warm plate and smoothly transferred to the pages with microscopic rises and full tonal ranges that closely approximated Weston's prints. The costs for this book, and others, was partially raised by pre-paid ten dollar subscriptions. Larger donations from Weston's benefactors, particularly art collector Walter Arensberg, and support from Weyhe covered the remaining expenses. <sup>15</sup> The book's edition was 550 copies, each signed by Weston.

Both Weston and Armitage aspired to be agents of radical cultural change, an ambition that each recognized and appreciated in the other. Weston's legacy derived from his acceptance of subjects not typically associated with fine art; his recognition of abstract forms in subjects ranging from a barley sifter to nudes; his straightforward approach "aiming at the stark reality of things"; and finally, and most lastingly, the intelligence and insight imparted in the best of his images. <sup>16</sup>Armitage's revolutionary breakthrough was in his reinvention of book design. As he described his motivation: "The most casual investigation of a library disclosed that books of all categories wore the same dress. Yet no producer would play Shakespeare, Gilbert and Sullivan and *South Pacific* in identical décor. My aim was to relate the design of the book to the subject of the text." <sup>17</sup>

Armitage claimed as his design inventions use of end-papers, double-page title pages, large readable type, and generous margins, developing a strong personal style which was easily recognized as his. Graphic designer Louise Sandhaus published an article titled "Merle Armitage: Daddy of a Sunbaked Modernism," based on the idea that "California is, in fact, a moving target that has motivated fresh starts," an idea that could also be applied to Weston. Sandhaus identified Armitage as "the first in the lineage of designers from a certain ilk that rejected tradition, forged their own path, and did it their way. They set about to invent 'the new".... or to rethink "the book' by rethinking the reading experience." <sup>18</sup> She cited Armitage's imaginative covers and reinvention of title page design as well as his use of type, photographs, and drawings to create visual as well as verbal languages to elevate the artist or concept being featured. She also noted

- 15] Weston's friends Ramiel McGehee, a dancer and designer and Cedric Gibbon, the Hollywood art director were also listed in the brief acknowledgements, but the nature of their contributions, whether monetary or artistic are unknown.
- 16] Armitage, "Edward Weston Perfected a New Art" in Accent on Life, 209.
- 17] Merle Armitage. Merle Armitage: Book Designer. (Austin: The Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, 1963), unpaginated.
- 18] Louise Sandhaus, "Merle Armitage: Daddy of a Sunbaked Modernism." *Design Observer.* 19 October 2012, https://designobserver.com/feature/merle-armitage-daddy-of-a-sunbaked-modernism/35878.

his preference for commissioning distinguished artists and photographers, such as Weston, to provide the visual material. For instance, Armitage opened his book on Stravinsky with eight distinctive portraits of Stravinsky by Weston. <sup>19</sup> "Perhaps," Sandhaus speculated, "Armitage was winking at the notion of the 'celebrity portrait'.... Armitage's voice was witty, sardonic and sly. The work loudly and laughingly embraces fun as hedonistic pleasure, employing a sense of delight and adventure over certainty and constraint." <sup>20</sup>

In The Art of Edward Weston (1932) Armitage introduced a few of the aspects that would soon identify his style: large page numbers and ample space bordering the text and images as well as between the lines of text. Yet to come in later books were designed end-papers and double-page spreads for title pages, both of which appear in Fifty Photographs: Edward Weston (1947) [PLATE3 and 4]. The 1932 book features four brief tributes to Weston's art as well as a statement by Weston and thirty-nine images from the first decade of his mature style. All of the texts are by friends: artists Charles Sheeler and Jean Charlot, muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens, and Los Angeles Times art critic Arthur Millier<sup>21</sup>. At a time when neither photography as an art form nor Weston's photographs were widely accepted outside the photographic community, the accompanying essays took on a defensive tone. Art critic David Levi Strauss found the 1932 book's five essays providing "a needless abundance" of "that strange mixture of defiance and apology that characterized art photography at that time." <sup>22</sup>

The featured photographs range chronologically from *Armco Steel* (1922) to an image of a gnarled cypress tree photographed in 1932, taken just weeks before the book was printed. However, the reproductions were not displayed chronologically, but follow Weston's and Armitage's own pictorial logic, which dictated not grouping by subject except in the portrait section. For instance, the book's first three pictures are *Eroded Plank from a Barley Sifter* (1931), *Armco Steel* (1922), and *Pepper No 30* (1930) [PLATE 2], one of Weston's iconic images. Weston's intent was best expressed in a summary of his first Guggenheim year: "I tried to sublimate my subject matter, to reveal its significance, to reveal *Life* 

- 19] Sandhaus, "Merle Armitage: Daddy of a Sunbaked Modernism." Weston photographed Day and Newcombe for their Armitage books in 1932 and in 1935. Armitage brought Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Millard Sheets, and E. E. Cummings to Weston's studio to be photographed for Armitage publications. He used various Weston photographs of vegetables in his best-selling cookbook *Fit for a King* (1939, enlarged and republished in 1949). Lincoln Steffens, a friend of Weston's, was photographed for the 1932 Weston book and later Steffens used a different image by Weston for his autobiography.
- 20] Ibid.
- 21] Sheeler and Armitage also both wrote recommendations for Weston's 1936 Guggenheim Foundation application.
- 22] Andrew Roth and Richard Benson. The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century. (New York: PPP Editions, 2001), 128-129.

like this through it." <sup>23</sup> The vegetable and shell still lifes and details of trees, rocks, and other natural forms that Weston began to photograph after Mexico constitute all but seven of the book's plates.

The images are grouped into three sections according to the picture's orientation. The first section features eleven vertical images with a large page number on the upper left corner of the opposing page and the caption in the lower left. The second section includes ten vertical portraits, and the third section contains seventeen horizontal reproductions and one vertical — the iconic standing nautilus shell (1932), as the last image. While the book was designed with a vertical format, the third section requires the viewer to turn the book 90 degrees. The horizontal pictures lay on pages with the binding at the top of the images. The captions on the adjacent page were also turned to be read while the book was held sideways while the page number remained vertical. The goal of these maneuvers was to allow all the plates in the book to be printed the actual size of the original photographs rather than shrinking the horizontal pictures to fit on a vertical page. Clearly, this adjustment pleased Weston as the same design feature was repeated in the 1947 layout, except that the text orientation is not shifted.

It was also primary for Weston that the pictures stand alone, each on its own merit and not grouped by subject or affinities of style. Consequently, they resist building as a sequenced unit as do, for instance, the images in Robert Frank's *The Americans*. Weston's stand-alone approach has been criticized by contemporary evaluations. As noted by photographer and author Martin Parr in his book *The Photobook: A History* (2004), Ansel Adams and Weston's work was not "included because as photobook-makers they did not rise to their level as photographers, and Weston's two finest books were simply anthologies of his best pictures. It would seem that their concentration on the single, autonomous 'fine' print somewhat cramped their potential as book-makers." <sup>24</sup>

While both Weston and Armitage were known as charming men, neither was known to compromise regarding their art, with the exception of Armitage-the-impresario's input in selecting pictures with sales in mind. He preferred to include portraits of subjects who were internationally known, which might explain why the moderately successful portrait of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo was included rather than, for instance, Weston's moving portrait of Tina Modotti reciting poetry or of his portrait of Jean Charlot, a friend who contributed a tribute to the book. Possibly, those same concerns about appealing to new audiences blocked the inclusion of Weston's distinctive, and for some, contro-

<sup>23]</sup> Conger, "Biography" in Edward Weston: Photographs from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, 35.

<sup>24]</sup> Martin Parr and Gerry Badger. *The Photobook: A History*. Vol. I (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2004), 9.

versial new nude studies or of the photograph *Excusado*, a variously admired or thunderously criticized photograph of Weston's toilet in Mexico. The other portraits were of Weston's most generous benefactor Albert Bender, Mexican Senator Manuel Hernandez Galán, artist José Clemente Orozco, writers Robinson Jeffers and D. H. Lawrence, dancers Harald Kreutzberg and Rose Covarrubias, journalist Lincoln Steffens, and Jack Black, a convicted burglar and best-selling author of his life of crime. Structurally, the 1947 book mirrors key decisions made for the 1932 book: pictures are not arranged chronologically or by subject. There are essays by Armitage, Jeffers and Donald Baer as well as a statement by Weston.<sup>25</sup>

It is also important to mention that Armitage conceived another project for Weston that proved enormously productive. Armitage connected the photographer with George Macy, director of the Limited Editions Book Club in New York who commissioned Weston to travel across America creating images for a new edition of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass. Armitage was commissioned to design the book. <sup>26</sup> Along the lines of traditional livres d'artistes, Weston never intended the photographs to be illustrations and proposed they be published without titles or captions. Edward and Charis spent nine months driving through twenty states during which Weston made between seven and eight hundred photographs. <sup>27</sup> He selected just over seventy prints from which he and Armitage expected to select fifty-four for publication. Macy wrote that he was thrilled by the photographs, but shortly thereafter fired Armitage and ceased contact with Weston about the design and production. Macy designed Leaves of Grass using pale green paper for text pages and green borders around Weston's images, which shocked and angered both Weston and Armitage. Jean Charlot described the color as "Spanish bathroom tile green." 28

Armitage and Weston's collaborations were important in the careers of both men. Weston's 1932 book, which was his first monograph, featured the first decade of his mature style. The book brought him professional acclaim as well as print sales and museum and gallery exhibitions in the U.S. and Europe. Fifteen years later, their second collaboration focused primarily on Weston's last ten years of work through 1946, the year that Weston was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and soon stopped taking photographs.<sup>29</sup> Each of the Ar-

- 25] Edition of 1500.
- 26] Armitage's maquette and preliminary designs for the book belong to the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas.
- 27] The trip was cut short by the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
- 28] Conger, "Biography" in Edward Weston: Photographs from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, 37.
- 29] Weston ended his photographic practice in 1948 and died ten years later.

mitage/Weston monographs was voted one of the Fifty Best Books of the Year by the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Armitage claimed in a 1963 catalogue that The Art of Edward Weston was "my most forward thrust to date." <sup>30</sup> A copy in good condition is now among the most valuable of Weston's monographs and also among books designed by Armitage. But in conversations for this article, numerous designers had never heard of Armitage. Graphic designer Mý Linh Triệu Nguyễn, Creative Director, STUDIO LHOOQ acknowledged, "I didn't learn about him in any of my classes, either at UCLA or Yale, but through personal research." Nguyễn admires Armitage's attitude and approach, "especially his pursuit to satisfy his curiosity." <sup>31</sup> Fortunately the history of art tends to be cyclical and once admired artists are forgotten, they are then rediscovered. Surely such talent and accomplishments as possessed by these two friends and collaborators will return to the light for further contemporary evaluation.

- 30] Armitage, Merle Armitage: Book Designer, unpaginated.
- 31] Mỹ Linh Triêu Nguyễn email to author 29 May 2019.

## Exhibit In A Book

## Deirdre Donohue

How do you put an exhibit in a book? You come up with a format spacious enough to accommodate images big enough to require that your eyes roam them and to tempt you to dive in and swim. But the books had better not be all that big. Coffee tables would have to be reinforced. So we settled on a size, 10 ½ by 13 ½ inches, and a name *Exhibit Format*...We got the U.S. Register of Copyrights to agree to our moving the title page well into the book, following a several page prelude. I designed a double-spread-size promotional brochure folded into an envelope that modestly claimed, 'The most important announcement the Sierra Club has ever made.'

— David Brower, For Earth's Sake (1990)

Is IT POSSIBLE TO LOOK ANEW at the Sierra Club's Exhibit Format series [PLATE 5] after they have been so thoughtfully considered from multiple historical, political, and social perspectives by many excellent writers, like Deborah Bright, Nicolas Blower and Rebecca Solnit? I will try to forge a fresh track by looking at their form, photobooks as a medium a half-century ago, and the overt emphases given to their material qualities. Marshall McLuhan's Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man was published in 1964, the very midpoint of the series, so it seems fitting to take a look at this actual medium; the photobook, as a container for these messages, which called attention to their manufacture as well as the calls to action that were their raison d'etre. The series, produced throughout

the sixties, has been considered the template for a kind of environmental mass media today. Yet, at the time, it was perceived very differently, before this kind of image-making was rendered wallpaper by its ubiquity.

Beginning with that Brower origin story above, there is an inscribed interest in the printing of photographs, attention to the scale, and materials of production, as keys to the great ambition of the enterprise. Who is David Brower, a name that is inextricably linked to the environmental movement of the United States in the post-war 20th century? He was the first Executive Director of the Sierra Club and founder of Friends of the Earth and the Earth Island Institute. He was also a sufficient naturalist, showman and messenger to protect the wilderness, so much so that he was featured in a remarkable three-part profile in the *New Yorker* in 1971 that became John McPhee's *Encounters with the Archdruid*. In the article he recounted:

"In 1960, in Yosemite Valley, Brower helped put together an exhibit of land-scape photographs and accompanying swatches of prose. Then he developed the idea of circulating the exhibit in book form. The result was the Sierra' Club's Exhibit-Format series — big, four pound, creamily beautiful, living-room-furniture books that argue the cause of conservation in terms, photographically, of exquisite details from the natural world and, textually, of essences of writers like Thoreau and Muir. Brower was editor and publisher. He selected the photographs. He wrote the multiple prefaces. In his way, as in others, he brought the words 'Sierra Club' into the national frame of reference...Within nine years, people had paid ten-million dollars for Exhibit-Format books, and Brower said he had been surprised to find that people were willing to pay that much for beauty." [PLATE 6]

"At twenty-five dollars a copy, the books were, in a sense, investments, and rich conservationists bought them in round lots. Struggling conservationists could buy them in compacted form as three-dollar-and-ninety-five-cent paperbacks."

The target audience of these books were consumers who were increasingly asking more of their acquisitions. In order for the Sierra Club to convey their messages into these homes and libraries, packaging would play a significant role, and that would need to be immediately evident to the prospective buyer. More was being asked of the printing technology, as well. A detailed piece in *Publishers' Weekly* in 1965 described the re-tooling of presses and costly experiments with screen resolution, four-color printing, and press speed. Indeed, at the time most photobooks were being printed in Switzerland or the Netherlands, so the New York press was being asked to raise their standards and work closely with a photographer to obtain the best results.

McPhee's origin story does not include the specter of a monument of modernist institutional statements about the global village of media in the way that The Museum of Modern Art's infamous *The Family of Man* (1955) touring exhibition and now legendary photobook did.

After viewing the cover and photographic endpapers of an Exhibit Format book, the reader immediately happens upon editor Brower's account of the printing processes that shape these photographs of wilderness. Unlike a standard colophon, in the "Publisher's Note" of book four in the series he writes:

"In Wildness..." is lithographed in four colors on 90-lb. coated stock and lacquered to achieve maximum brilliance and fidelity in the color reproductions, themselves made directly from 4 × 5 transparencies, except for one 2 ½ × 2 ¼. The text is on the uncalendered side for easier reading. The pages had to be collated singly and side-sewn; this assures firm anchorage, among other advantages, but prevents the book's lying quite flat — especially the left-hand pages. The color, however, is the main thing to display, and we could find no technique for displaying it better. We consulted five domestic printers and four in Europe before we found our solution. It was of transcending importance to find a top-quality printer who would hue



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[sic] to the interpretation of the color photographer. Barnes Press, Inc. met the platemaking and printing challenge; the Sendor Bindery devised the binding. Both firms share an address on Spring Street, in New York City, and both did more than anyone could reasonably expect to make the most out of the opportunity to produce something extraordinary in the graphic arts. The book is set in Centaur and Arrighi (designed by Bruce Rogers) by Mackenzie & Harris, Inc., San Francisco. The design is by David Brower.

Each book carries these extensive publisher notes, with content varying somewhat, but nearly all end with Brower's name, which seems like the opening credits of a film, where the director is the last name you see before the action begins. There is no doubt who the auteur is here. He does, however, acknowledge the skills of those who collaborated on the books, both in forewords and acknowledgements, which were often merged. In the foreword of book seven: *Ansel Adams: The Eloquent Light* (1963), Brower acknowledges the role of Nancy Newhall:

"I have been fortunately involved in several books and exhibits that have felt the creative force of Mrs. Newhall. In all I have known, she has repeatedly demonstrated an extraordinary sense of what has to happen to make words and photographs work together."

The play of text and image in the books is something that undoubtedly owes a debt to Nancy Newhall, whose 1952 essay in the first issue of *Aperture* described an evolving taxonomy of captions, among which she denoted:

"In the Additive Caption, the basic principle is independence — and *interde*pendence — of the two mediums. The words do not parrot what the photographs say, the photographs are not illustrations. They are recognized as having their own force."

In the opening passage, Brower remarks upon moving the title page deeper into the book [PLATE 7]. The interplay of words and images in the series is, indeed, a manifestation of Nancy Newhall's "additive caption," and is one of the echoes of the exhibitions that inspired the book series. Many of the books consist of an interleaving poetry or prose quotations with images, sometimes progressing over several pages.

In the foreword of book eight: *Time and the River Flowing: Grand Canyon* (1964) [PLATE 8], Brower illuminates production by acknowledging various contributors that typically go unrecognized:

...to the keyboard and caster men who put in untold overtime hours converting the typescript to Centaur; to the heroic work of Hugh Barnes and the score or more of associates at Barnes Press who once again accepted one of our books as far more than an ordinary graphic-arts challenge; to the ingenuity of the Sendor bindery

people for devising the method of binding one-sided Kromecote the way they do (and to the persistent girls who must walk 300 miles to pick up from the tables all the leaves of the first printing); to the supporters who believed enough in the book to commit themselves to 4,300 copies of it before they saw it...

We also catch a glimpse here of the funding challenges that were, by all accounts, a leitmotif of the whole series of twenty books. To pre-sell 4,300 copies of a photobook is something that we recognize today from the increasing number of photobooks that are created through crowd-funding methods; at mid-century it was an almost unprecedented practice. The storytelling that we find in these forewords is surely indicative of that which pre-sold these books—creating anticipation about content and container.

The main subject, however, of Brower's awe in describing the process is photography's transformation into print, as in the Foreword for "In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World" (1962):

There is absolute pitch too — absolute color pitch. As we looked at the dye-transfer prints in Porter's exhibit, *The Seasons*, which the Smithsonian Institution circulates and from which this book derives, then peered at his four-by-five transparencies, and finally as we watched him review color proofs at the Barnes Press, we were quietly amazed by what this manknows about color. He remembers exactly what was there when the shutter let a moment's light in, and he knows what must happen technically if that moment is to be fixed. We have not yet seen all his colors in their natural habitat. But we are confident that if we borrow his acuity and walk out into waldens here and there, we shall find those colors ourselves. If we are very fortunate, once in a while they may perform for us the quiet symphony that responds to his baton.

He returns to discuss negative format in the Foreword of book twelve, *Everest* (1965):

Unlike any other Sierra Club book, this one has depended largely upon 35 mm color transparencies for illustration. Others in the Exhibit Format Series have rarely drawn upon anything smaller than 2  $\frac{1}{4} \times 2 \frac{1}{4}$ , have relied chiefly upon 4 × 5's, and have luxuriated occasionally in 5 × 7's and 8 × 10's. Some detail must necessarily be lost in 35 mm, particularly if the camera is hand-held. Heavy tripods and cameras are not popular on Everest with amateurs or anyone else; 35 mm, for all the drawbacks, is a boon.

Brower has not said it all in the foreword, however. Under the contents page of the same book is "A note on the make-up of the book: There are many important advantages in lithographing color photographs on the highly calendered side of a sheet and single-sheet collation of the book; but there is at least one disadvantage — the requirement that there be no less than one page of text for each page of illustration. Kromekote was accordingly a difficult taskmaster at times. The marriage between Tom Hornbein's West Side Story and a representative

selection of photographs from the Expedition (and by Norman Dyrhenfurth from other expeditions of his) does not always run an obvious course."

Such disarming transparency! Most of these notes emphasize the fact that the books are vehicles for images. Images are doing the heavy-lifting, and in so doing sometimes compromise placement of the text to ensure the aesthetic force of them.

Rebecca Solnit has written "The Porter aesthetic was born out of an individual talent and grew into a genre — 'nature photography' — in which thousands of professionals and amateurs now toil (though most value beauty more and truth less than he did). His photographs have come to embody what we look for and value in the natural world, what the public often tries to photograph, and what a whole genre of photography imitates. Porter's pictures of nature look, so to speak, 'natural' now; this is the greatest cultural success any ideology or aesthetic can have. We now live in a world Porter helped to invent."

The Sierra Club published a book in 1967 that was not in the Exhibit Format series called On the Loose that had calligraphy instead of typeface and, although the title page boasted "illustrated by 63 brilliant photographs," on the verso was the following note above the dedication, "The photographs in this book are of the lowest fidelity obtainable. They are as far from the photographer's vision as cheap cameras, mediocre film, and drugstore processing could make them."

This text seems to be a parodic parallel to what had by now become an expected story somewhere around the Sierra Club colophon about the excellence of photography becoming print.

Last year, Radius Books published *Drowned River* by photographers Mark Klett and Byron Wolf and writer Rebecca Solnit, an homage to book five in the series *The Place No One Knew* by Eliot Porter. The opening pages of the new book are faithful reproductions of a careworn copy of the 1963 book, including the colophon, acknowledgements, and mapped end pages. Among the first contemporary images in the book is a photograph by one photographer of the other with a copy of the Sierra Club book, in linen binding, on his lap on the journey. Just as Brower endeavored to obtain the most excellent, highest resolution images, Klett and Byron are known for both their deference and reference to the great Western photographers and the virtuosity of the images and care in seeing them printed and bound. The book looks fondly back to the *Exhibit Format* book's medium, and forward to very complex messages that result from a thorough new engagement with its form.

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# Experimental Photobooks in Los Angeles: Cynthia Marsh and Rachel Youdelman

## Tony White

MANY ARTISTS CREATED PHOTOGRAPHIC BOOKWORKS in Los Angeles in the 1970s, following a confluence of events, which led to an expansion of experimental publishing. Within this community, two relatively unknown artists — Cynthia Marsh and Rachel Youdelman — began actively producing and publishing their own photobooks. While their books represent the kind of publications that many artists were producing at this time outside of the mainstream art world, they also reveal their makers as original voices responding to the field of better-known practitioners.

Marsh and Youdelman emerged from a publishing culture that took shape in the early 1970s, a time when a number of important transformations in publishing were occurring on a national scale. Visual and performance artists, photographers, and designers were all pushing the boundaries, inspiring and influencing each other, in addition to referencing the experimental and avant-garde publications from the previous decade. These included conceptual and avant-garde books by artists who later became well known, such as John Baldessari, Robert Frank, Dick Higgins, Sol LeWitt, Yoko Ono, Dieter Roth, Ed Ruscha, Lawrence Weiner, and many others.

At that time in California, lesser-known artists who lacked institutional financial backing for their book projects had to rely on the offset print facilities at local colleges and universities; in Los Angeles, equipment was also accessible at the newly founded Woman's Building. This center was founded in 1973 by Judy Chicago, Sheila de Bretteville, and Arlene Raven as a place for women to gather and reflect upon their lives while they created work in the visual and performing arts, and honed their skills as designers and writers. The Feminist Studio Workshop was a school for women artists that operated out of the Woman's Building, and in 1981 the institution grew to include the Women's Graphic Center business. In all of these endeavors, as with elsewhere in the art world at this time, most artists were printing books alone or collaboratively in non-professional print shops. And when women authors and artists took control of the design and publication of books in the early 1970s, their creative expressions pushed beyond the hegemony of the art publishing and art gallery systems. It should be recognized that in the previous decade art galleries were primarily exhibiting the work of male artists. Publication and distribution of photobooks and artists' books provided a means and platform for women artists in the 1970s to produce and distribute their work outside of the gallery and traditional publishing systems.

Marsh and Youdelman came into the Los Angeles book production scene through the Woman's Building. Marsh had come to Los Angeles from the East Coast, where in 1966 she began working in a Boston commercial offset lithography shop before enrolling at Philadelphia's Moore College of Art. There she studied printmaking and performance art, and she discovered Ed Ruscha's photobooks, which greatly influenced her own work. A year after graduating she enrolled at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where she received an MFA in printmaking and commercial offset printing in 1973. During the summer of 1972 she assisted Joan Lyons with the setup of an offset duplicator at her newly founded Visual Studies Workshop Press, which would go on to become one of several important independent presses printing artists' books and photobooks. Marsh moved to Los Angeles in 1973 and began working as a professor of Design and Printmaking at California State University at Northridge, where she stayed until 1991. From the early 1970s and well into the 1980s Marsh utilized offset lithography to print her photobooks: loose pages which she housed in reusable metal-clasp manila envelopes.

A year after Marsh arrived in L.A. Sheila de Bretteville hired her as the first offset printer at the Woman's Building. Part of her role there was to teach and train women to print using the offset lithographic press. Marsh's students included Susan King, Cherrie Gaulke, Carol Chen, and Rachel Youdelman, among many others. She used the facilities of the Woman's Building for the production of her own work, such as The Sporting Life (1975) and Lifestyle (1976) [PLATE 9]. Both are printed on oversize cardstock sheets. Pages are illustrated with realistic photo reproductions and hand-drawn images in color or black and white, and intentionally printed with low contrast to heighten the apparent flatness of each reproduced image on the page, further distancing each image from external associations. Text is typeset or copied from a book spread, or seemingly reproduced from a newspaper. There is a sense of fragmentation images and narrative elements are seemingly placed at random on each page throughout the books. With the exception of the title page, the unbound sheets of the book could be viewed in any order, enhancing Marsh's emphasis on play, free association, and chance as important design elements. For example, the books lack the cohesion and structure of a photobook by Frank, Ruscha, or Youdelman (as described below); each of these artists' works relies on the sequence of images to drive the narrative. Instead, her books have more in common with Dieter Roth's accumulation books of random sheets bound together, whether from children's coloring books or printer's run-up sheets.

Marsh's book Hey You: My Way is Best! (1984), similar to other works by her from the 1980s, has six pages in a portrait format on cover stock. Her skills at printing are evident in high quality images, layout and design, in comparison

to her less refined works from the early 1970s. This book utilizes cropped and manipulated found images, showcasing the artist's printing skills; the technique also makes it impossible to decipher the context and meaning of the images. The layouts of appropriated and reprinted book illustration, text page, advertising photograph, and other seemingly found imagery, appear as if in a scrapbook or album, or similar random collection of images.

Marsh's book We Live the Good Life (1986) is also made of up six loose pages, in portrait format. She uses four-color offset lithography printing, varying image sizes and a wide variety of font sizes and styles, limiting the photographic imagery to color snapshots of houses and dwellings, and the text and type vary from page to page, with words and phrases in a variety of styles. All of the imagery and text are printed on the recto of each page as she did in the 1970s. The images and texts sometimes resonate from page to page, creating more thematic coherence than in her earlier works. And yet, like her other photobooks, this book benefits from having loose, unbound sheets, that can be put in any order by the reader. While the images and texts seem to come from personal sources, advertising, or other found sources, this book's array of imagery is closer to the bland, conceptual photobooks of Ed Ruscha than to the more personal narrative works published by Youdelman.

While Rachel Youdelman worked and studied under the guidance of Cynthia Marsh, publishing photobooks using offset lithography at the Woman's Building, she had also had opportunities to self-publish small photobooks while a student at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles. There, she had access to the Gestetner mimeograph in the schools' Graphic Arts department. In 1973, Youdelman used this machine to publish her first photobook, Let's Fall in Love (with JM Lester). The book is made up of 2"× 2" black-and-white printed photographic images, hand colored, and centered in the top half of the page. Under each photograph, which shows the same woman driving or sleeping in the front seats of a car, a single word appears starting with Let's. Then, fall, under the image on page two, and so forth: "Let's fall in love, why don't we fall in love?" The book is a narrative, a poem, a story, and a question. The women in the photographs all have their mouths open, and are smiling a little, as if they were singing the words in this book. This book is published in pamphlet format. It is a sequence of snapshots each of which offers a glimpse into a single moment. The photographs read like medium format contact prints instead of film frames. There is no introductory text to create a larger context for increased understanding, rather the words build their own framework.

Youdelman continued her interrogation of the relationship between word and image, producing two books in 1976. The more ambitious of the two was

Fresh Sea Bass from the Blue Pacific (featuring D.R. Johnson). This book was printed at the Woman's Building. The staple bound pamphlet has a light blue cover stock cover and 10 pages within. Its offset printed image quality is superior to Let's Fall in Love, yet still lack contrast and appear flat and dull. The photographs are of a white male waiter in black tie, holding a notepad, pencil, and a towel, and on each page, he reads a phrase about the featured menu item. The text is printed in italic, directly on the photographic reproduction itself. Images and text follow:

- 1) Fresh sea bass from the blue Pacific
- 2) sautéed in lemon butter...
- 3) with fine herbs ...
- 4) served with a creamy crab Newberg sauce . . .
- 5) gourmet vegetable eggplant Parmesan

The waiter performs the act of reading in each image. This meditation on ordering a somewhat fancy meal has a tongue-in-cheek playfulness, and again it relies on the reader to construct a coherent narrative.

In that same year Youdelman printed At the Theater using a mimeograph at Cal Arts. This title is a single page card-stock accordion fold book in four panels, Smyth-sewn into a paper cover. The tall oblong pages ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ "×  $8\frac{5}{8}$ "), paired with tall vertical photo-images in black and white, take over slightly more than half the page. There is text above the photographs in italics.

Page one: Clumsy fool – that's my food you stepped on!
Page two: Blow your dirty cigarette smoke somewhere else!

Page three: Keep that noisy popcorn to yourself!

Page four: This place is a flea-pit!

The work is playful and critical, making fun of the sometimes grating experiences we endure at the cinema by exaggerating the facial expressions to match the dialogue, and acting out the pantomimes we may feel represent our inner-selves.

In 1977 Youdelman published six photobooks: Let's Have Lunch, Water and Power, The Pursuit of Pleasure and Novelty, Dinner for 8, When We Entertain, and Portrait of a Purse Thief. [PLATE 10] Her skills as a printer improved with each new book, and her images showed greater visual depth, with high contrast images. This is evident in When We Entertain. For this book she appropriated a sentence from Vogue magazine as the basis for the book: "When we entertain, we always sit on the floor and have Chinese food." In the photos she has her friends sit in as models to act out the storyline. No further critical insights are offered by the artist. Her book Portrait of a Purse Thief is based on a theft that Youdelman witnessed in L.A. In a nod to newspaper printing of the time, she chose to use

Clarion as the font throughout this work. The police ask, "What color were his eyes?" about the thief. For Youdelman, this question, indicated to her that the police were not taking the report seriously. In Dinner for 8 Youdelman creates a book that is similar in content to Fresh Sea Bass, but this newer work is less visually compelling. The layout and overall page design is not as cohesive, and the binding is poorly considered: two holes punched near the spine edge with a black ribbon securing the pages. The paper is too stiff for this type of binding. However, a note in the book indicates it was created for Artwords and Bookworks, an important exhibition at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art in 1978. Youdelman's book The Pursuit of Pleasure and Novelty was printed at the Women's Graphic Center featuring the story "The Jester of Seville and the Stone Guest," which serves as the basis of the Don Juan myth, and in turn for her own photo-narrative. She created this book as a "feminist reframing of that myth and hoped that this new book would disarm it." In Water and Power, the title references the California utility of the same name, with the following subtitle: The Role of Water in the Lives of Several Prominent Statesmen. Youdelman uses the phrase 'water and power' to free-associate connections between individual world leaders and their relationships with water. On successive pages she quotes Mao Tse-Tung, Richard Nixon, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Joseph Stalin, followed by black-and-white photo reproductions of each leader in proximity to water: Mussolini at the beach, Stalin at the Black Sea, Nixon at Long Beach, Hitler in a motor boat, Mao swimming, and so forth. She successfully annotates the images with quotations by the leaders, each of which includes a reference to water. Youdelman's intersection of the elemental force of water and its relationship to these often brutal leaders infuses a layer of humanity on the otherwise static images that we have collectively developed for these figures. Beyond the minimal evidence she provides, any additional linkages or meanings are left to the reader to imagine or extrapolate.

Whereas Marsh recalls being influenced by Ed Ruscha's photobooks in the late 1960s, Youdelman remembers being influenced by Helen Alm at Cal Arts, and de Bretteville at the Woman's Building, and by Walter Benjamin's essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." As a painting student at Cal Arts, Youdelman was inspired by Alm who ran the graphics and photography studios. There she found a form of expression for telling stories through printing and producing books. In comparison, the static solemnity of the painting studios just did not inspire her to make new works. Reading Benjamin's essay came at this juncture in her creative development and inspired her to take a direct interpretation of this essay and to parse "mechanical reproduction" as referring to an artist interested in printing books with the aid of machines.

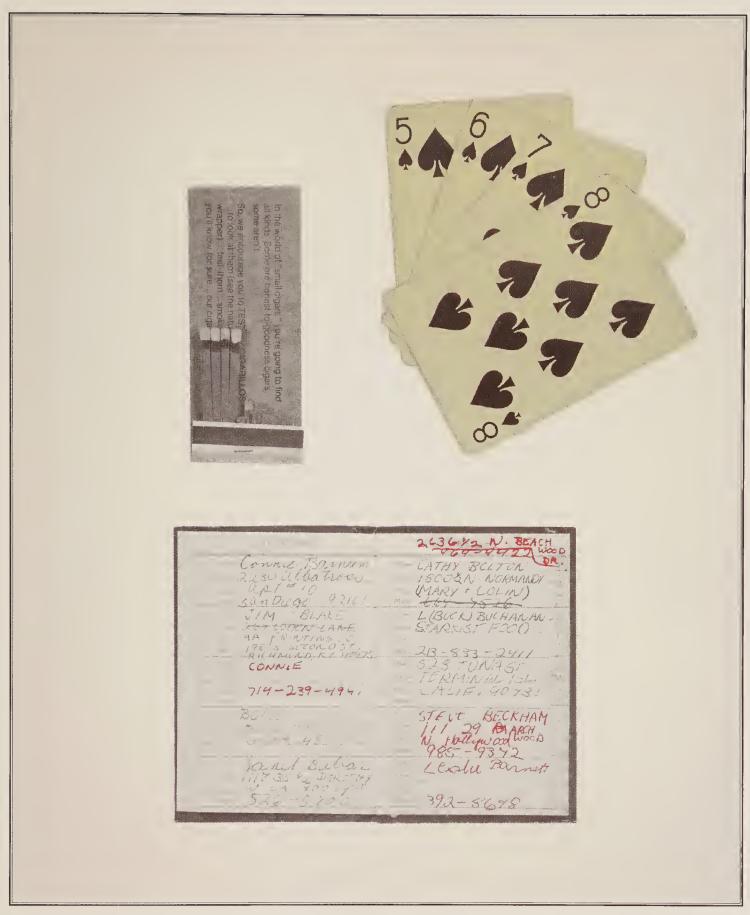


PLATE 9 Cynthia Marsh. *The Sporting Life* (1975). Detail. Image: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thomas J. Watson Library.

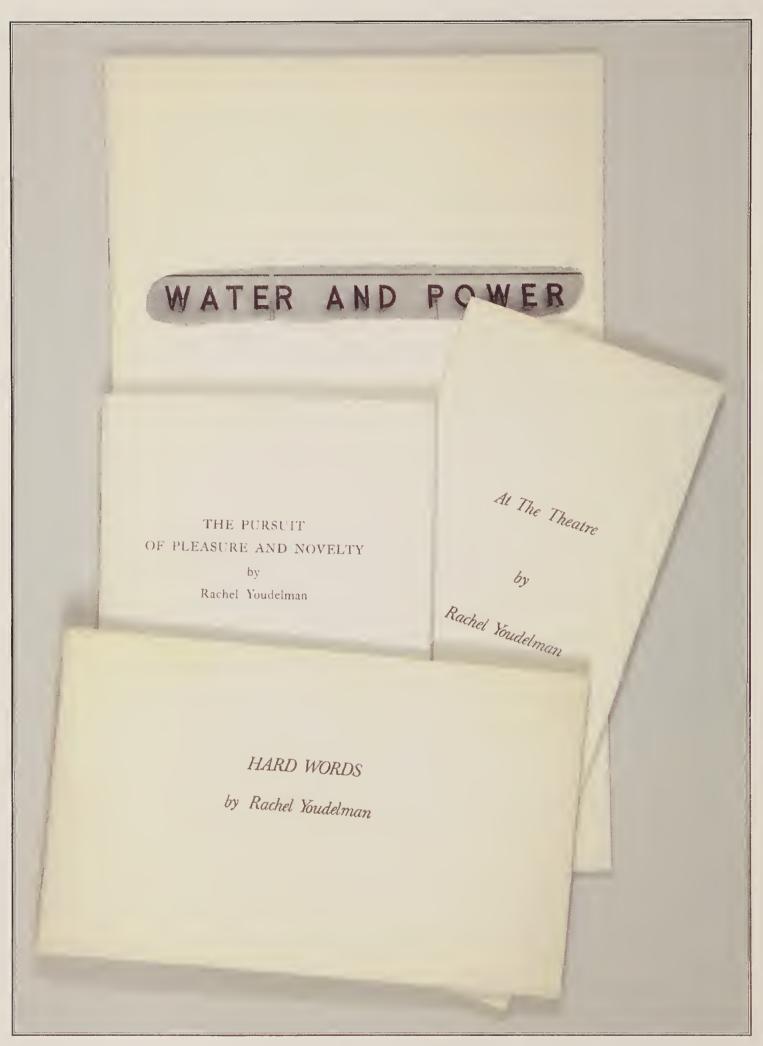


PLATE 10 Rachel Youdelman. *Water and Power* (1977), *The Pursuit of Pleasure and Novelty* (1977), *At the Theatre* (1976), and *Hard Words* (1976). Covers. Image: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thomas J. Watson Library.

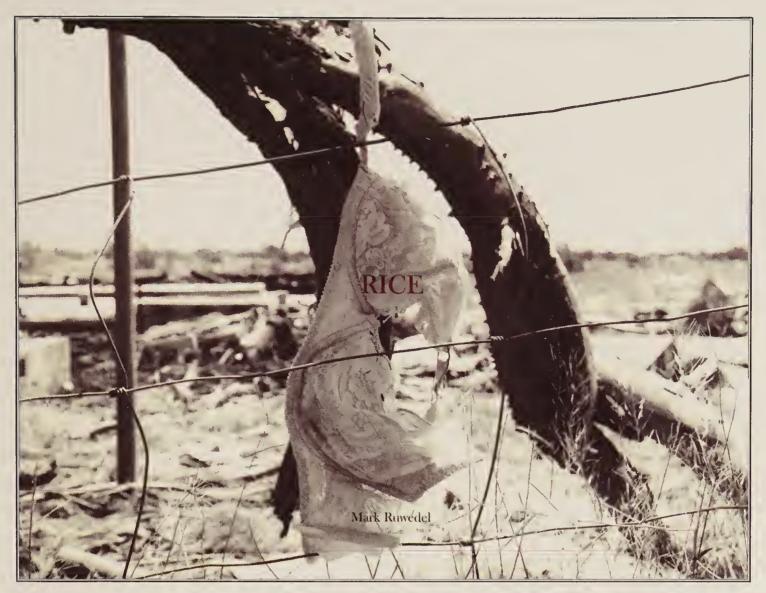


PLATE II Mark Ruwedel. *Rice, San Bernardino County* (2014). Front cover. Mark Ruwedel photographs (M2207). Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California. 

Mark Ruwedel.



PLATE 12 Mark Ruwedel. *Rice, San Bernardino County* (2014). Rear cover. Mark Ruwedel photographs (M2207). Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California. © Mark Ruwedel.



PLATE 13 Mark Ruwedel. Typical American House (2011). Page [13], full page print. Mark Ruwedel photographs (M2207). Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California. © Mark Ruwedel.

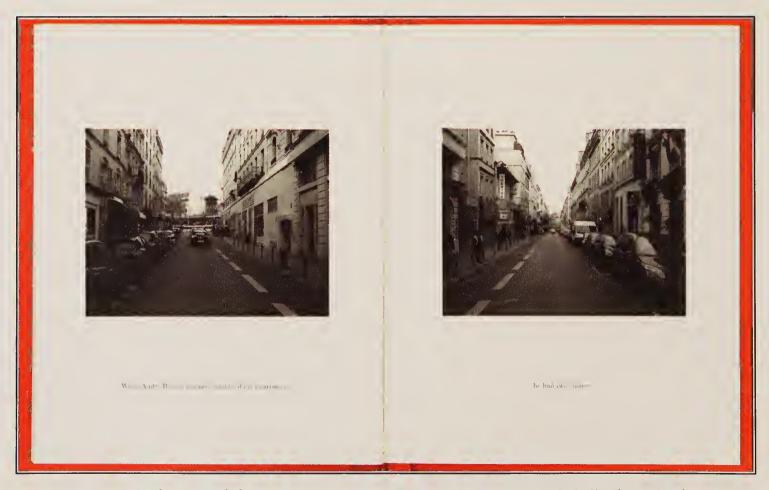


PLATE 14 Mark Ruwedel. *rue Fontaine – Paris* (2014/2015). Page [6], "When Andre Breton stepped outside of his apartment," page [7], "he had two choices." Mark Ruwedel photographs (M2207). Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California. © Mark Ruwedel.

Neither Marsh nor Youdelman identified as a photographer, but they intentionally used photographs to illustrate their photobooks, as a means to add greater veracity to their playful narratives. Participants at the Woman's Building were encouraged to create work based on personal stories. Youdelman's bookworks are more easily identifiable as narrative vignettes, whereas Marsh's works rely less on a linear narrative and more on seemingly random placement of visual signifiers on each printed page. Both lack pretension in their publications. Though self-consciously produced and printed, they were created in reaction to the overly conceptual and Pop Art sensibilities that dominated avant-garde and experimental photobooks in the 1960s.

Both Marsh and Youdelman used commercial printing technologies to experiment with the production of new bookworks, and in so doing they found a natural medium for expressing their playful and intuitive approaches to photobook publishing. Marsh's more conceptual and intentionally non-narrative layouts are heightened by refusing to constrain the sequencing of pagination by not binding her books. Youdelman's use of small pamphlets, in differing sizes, provided her with a platform for the layout of images and text that allow the reader to experience moments in time — similar to a poem, short story, or a wallet of travel snapshots. Both artists were making their own innovative works during a time of great experimentation in photobook publishing — clearly learning from those who had preceded them, while forging new narratives as photobook makers and new identities as artists.

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## "Between:" A Selective And Annotated Listing Of Photobooks And Related Works In The Mark Ruwedel Archive At Stanford University<sup>1</sup>

## Peter Blank

Due to the various and wide ranging influences associated with his career and oeuvre, Mark Ruwedel has been referred to as a "between" artist. In between who or what can be briefly listed as the 19th-century western landscape photographers (especially Timothy O'Sullivan), the foundational documentary practice of Walker Evans, the conceptual artists Robert Smithson, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, Edward Ruscha, and Bernd and Hilla Becher, and the photographers of the New Topographics movement, notably Robert Adams and Lewis Baltz.<sup>2</sup>

This broad array of artistic precedent, combined with Ruwedel's own creative agency, the observational strategies he employs on his field trips, and his constant explorations of the historical, cultural, geographical, and geological record of the North American west (especially the western deserts) has resulted in what Simon Baker refers to as "one of the most coherent and fully thought-through bodies of photographic work since those of Lewis Baltz or Bernd and Hilla Becher, the archetypes of so-called New Topographic photography." <sup>3</sup> Ruwedel's practice is also marked by a clear understanding of the shift in our readings of nature as "natural" to the realization that "nature" is a cultural construct, and that our photographic engagement with it, aka "landscape," is yet another construct that offers opportunities for comment and critique.

- I] As of this writing the Mark Ruwedel photography archive (https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/13157971) at Stanford Libraries includes ~1,800 works gifted or on deposit and includes approximately 50 photo artists' books, albums, portfolio studies, or combinatory studies on a single mount. A full inventory of these works is in process. The collection will be added to over time.
- 2] For readings on Ruwedel and his influences, see Grant Arnold, "The Future Remains: The Photographs of Mark Ruwedel," in Mark Ruwedel, et al. *Mark Ruwedel*. (Göttingen: Steidl, 2015), 104-113; and Ann Thomas, "About the Surface of the Earth: A Photographic Narrative," in Barry Lopez and Ann Thomas. *Mark Ruwedel: Written on the Earth* (North Vancouver, BC: Presentation House Gallery, 2002), 51-57. For the specific reference to "between," see Mark Ruwedel, Paul Roth, and Gaëlle Morel, "Mark Ruwedel in Conversation," in Ruwedel, *Mark Ruwedel*, 205. For his comments on the New Topographic photographers, see "Mark Ruwedel on New Topographics." Los Angeles County Museum of Art, published on October 28, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go\_UC-jLgl4.
- 3] Simon Baker, "Hellbound," in Mark Ruwedel, Simon Baker, and Chiara Siravo. *Mark Ruwedel: Pictures of Hell*. (Los Angeles: RAM Publications, 2014), 7. For Ruwedel's comments on observation and consideration, etc., see "Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2019 Nominee: Mark Ruwedel," The Photographers' Gallery, London, UK, published on March 13, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YB54\_CLAftA.

But even while internalizing these various influences Ruwedel has moved well beyond the conceptual artists and the New Topographic photographers. While extending the intelligent wedding of idea art with photographic description and documentation, Ruwedel has expanded conceptual and New Topographic modes via the integration of a fine print aesthetic (view camera and film-based, with gelatin silver prints created to exacting standards) with a project-based practice of documentary as the amassing of informational studies. In terms of the photobooks and albums, the editions are quite limited (varying from unique objects to editions of five), with impeccable gelatin silver prints (and pigment prints, maps, texts, etc.) mounted or tipped in.

Ruwedel estimates that he has made roughly one hundred books and albums. It is in these smaller works that the particulars of his practice are simply, but fully revealed — an investigative bent that is patiently employed (his projects can occur over the span of several years), a disciplined photographic syntax, the rigorous application of a standards-based practice, leavened by a subtle appreciation of our shared human predicaments. His interest in the book as media reaches back to his high school desire to become a comic book artist and his later MFA studies at Montreal's Concordia University (MFA, 1983) where he was intrigued by the bookworks of conceptual artists including Ruscha and Smithson (and eventually Long and Fulton). <sup>4</sup> It was likely in the artists' books and photo-documented projects of such photographically-based artists that Ruwedel noted how perfectly book-as-media could present the distillations of much larger projects, or serve up concise, cogent, pictorial recitatives.

Ruwedel has noted that: "If I am in any way a conceptualist, it is with a small "c." Conceptual art is a privileging of the idea over the object (or the image), and it is certainly more radical than my practice. But that thinking is part of what I do." 5 His captions and similar inscriptions in his books and albums are based on the presentation format of 19th-century photographic survey work. One of the first finished pieces which incorporated text and idea as art was *Photographs Along the Bozeman Trail*, 1988 (1988), seven gelatin silver prints on six mounts depicting sites around the location of the Battle of Little Big Horn: "This unholy wedding of photo-conceptualism and 19th-century landscape photography started with that project." 6

What follows is an extremely selective but fully annotated listing of twelve works in the Ruwedel archive. The categories are the author's and are merely introductory groupings to Ruwedel's practice and his longer term, inter-related projects.

- 4] Ruwedel, Paul Roth, and Gaëlle Morel, "Mark Ruwedel in Conversation," 204-205.
- 5] Ibid., 205.
- 6] Ibid., 205. An earlier example that suggested how Ruwedel would utilize documentation in service of cultural/pictorial investigation was his Concordia University MFA research project, *Homage to Walker Evans / Bethlehem*, PA (1982) (see annotation listing).

## THE DESERT WEST

► At the Southern Edge of Salton City (2012). Edition 3/3. 12" × 9.25". Two photographs.

Linen hinged, gray board covers, with title written in ink on a red-bordered paper label on front cover, the title written in pencil on recto of first page, signed and date d on recto of last page. With two gelatin silver prints and one page of red letterset text. The book opens with a straight on, centered shot of a shack, a small van, and an abandoned delivery truck lined up in the desert. On the verso of this page red letterset text lists the graffiti profanity painted on the front of the abandoned delivery truck, which is pictured in close-up on the facing page. Ruwedel's documentation of a forsaken and desolate desert vernacular, the consistency of his photographic grammar and the apparent emotional neutrality of his presentations are constants in his practice. This bedrock syntax is drawn from O'Sullivan's 40th parallel work of the 1870s, the Becher's Ruhr area industrial cataloging of the post-War era, the New Topographers' focus on the human-altered landscape and Ruscha's grammar of repetition. MRu.1042.2016

\*Rice, San Bernardino County (2014). Edition 2/3.10.5" × 13.5". Eleven photographs. Thread-bound, with black and white pigment prints mounted as front, rear, and inside covers, with title, "Rice" printed in red on front cover. Title page with full title in red and black, signed and dated on recto of last page. With an additional seven gelatin silver prints individually mounted on interior leaves. The cover prints show one bra each draped over a fence (front cover) [PLATE II] and one bra draped over a tree branch (rear cover) [PLATE I2]. The inside covers are shots looking up through the branches of trees and shrubs, with several bras hung on the branches. Various scenes of abandonment comprise the interior photos — a dilapidated gas station, a "bra tree," graffiti on an abandoned structure, three mattresses composed to make a triangular shelter, etc. Rice is a ghost town at the southern tip of the Mojave Desert, near Twenty-Nine Palms, CA, one of the sites that figures in Ruwedel's "1212 Palms" project. MRu.1039.2016

#### NUCLEAR AMERICA

Thread-bound, with black and white pigment prints mounted on front and rear boards, printed title page, signed and dated on back cover. With an additional three gelatin silver prints and eight color inkjet prints. With reproductions of four 1950s nuclear test photographs (the front of the reproduced print is on the recto of a page, the back of the reproduced print with numerous notations and stampings on the verso). These notes indicate that the tests were

performed in 1953 at Yucca Flat, Nevada Test Site. The three full-page gelatin silver prints are Ruwedel's works, one showing the test site and another two a wooden test house that is still standing [PLATE 13] (The same house is also pictured in two of the 1953 test images as the blast burns its siding off the walls.). Typical American House, Nevada Test Site Scrapbook (1995, MRu.453.2016), and The Conqueror (2012, MRu.1036.2016) are all photobook works drawn from Ruwedel's "The Italian Navigator" project, which references America's history of nuclear atmospheric testing in the 1950s. They demonstrate how a particular project can cycle through varying manifestations. 7 MRu.1040.2016

#### CONTEMPORARY CALIFORNIA

\$\$40 Difference (2015). Edition 5/10. Two photographs.

Rust-colored paper covers, thread-bound, with penciled title "\$40.00" on front cover and printed title page, signed and dated on verso of last page. With two color pigment prints printed on the left and right facing pages of a single folio. What is the \$40.00 difference? The left facing photo shows a green panel truck, "2 Maids Cleaning – Commercial & Residential – \$59," while the right facing page shows a hot pink panel truck, "Topless Maids – \$99." The humor (and despair?) of life in contemporary Los Angeles. MRu.1031.2016

Linen hinged, gray boards, with "Win or Lose" written in ink on red-bordered paper label on front cover, with full title written in ink on recto of first page, signed and dated on verso of last page. Two gelatin silver prints of similar building facades, at 1255 and 1259, no street name given, are mounted on facing pages. The first has a worn commercial sign, "Winning," the second a hand lettered painted sign, "Losing." Ruwedel's seemingly happenstance discovery and affectless embrace of the forlorn is again present (see *Rice, San Bernardino County*), here seasoned with wry humor – the "Winning" sign has seen better days (no winners here), the "Losing" sign perched at a precarious angle. MRu.1033.2016

#### ARTIST'S HOMAGES

**≈** 1212 Palms (2007). A/P. 11.25" × 14.25". Nine photographs.

Dark blue linen hardcover, spiral-bound, with title in letterset on front cover, with title and photographer's name in letterset on recto of first page and a small ink drawing of a palm tree at top center, signed and dated on recto of last page. With nine gelatin silver prints, mounted on recto of each page with the title in letterset on verso of the preceding page (opposite of print). The nine prints follow in "numerical" order, from "Una Palma" to "Four Palms Spring" to the last image, "Thousand Palms Oasis." Although there are not actually 1,212

<sup>7]</sup> See: Mark Ruwedel. The Italian Navigator. Montréal: ART 45, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Galerie François Blais, 2000.

palms pictured, the total of the numbers in the place names adds up to 1,212. One of several references to Ruscha in Ruwedel's bookworks, in this case to A Few Palm Trees (1971) and Ruscha's numbered books, e.g., Twenty Six Gasoline Stations (1972). "1212 Palms" is one of Ruwedel's place name projects, similar to the Dogtown artists' book (2013, MRu.1041.2016), but much smaller in scale and reach than the "Pictures of Hell" project. 1212 Palms was later commercially printed and released by Yale University Art Gallery. 8 MRu.43.2016

- Linen hinged, double board thickness covers, cream colored outer boards with patterned red and gold paper affixed inside the covers, the edges of the inside boards and interior linen hinges painted orange red. The front cover with partial title, "rue Fontaine," in red and the photographer's name in black; full title in red on the title page, with photographer's name and date, "2014," in green; signed, dated, numbered on verso of the last page. With three captioned inkjet prints "42, rue Fontaine" (showing the front of the building), "When Andre Breton stepped outside of his apartment" (looking one way down rue Fontaine), "he had two choices" (looking the other way) [PLATE 14]. A homage to Breton (and demonstrating Ruwedel's fascination with Surrealism). MRu.1564.2017
- \* Splitting For Gordon Matta-Clark (2009). Edition 2/2. 14" × 11". Two photographs.

Lightweight beige board covers, thread-bound, with cover title, "Splitting," in pencil, full title in pencil on title page, signed and dated on verso of last page. With two gelatin silver prints, mounted on facing pages. Two modular homes are shown, each as found split open down the middle. The book's extremely simple structure and presentation is a perfect platform for Ruwedel's matter-of-fact homage to Matta-Clark (and seriality, etc.) MRu.1566.2017

#### OTHER WORKS

- Beige linen hardcovers with fabric ties, with title and signature written in pencil on title page, signed on recto of last page, with note, "Cyanotypes made ca 93." With thirty-six 4" × 5" cyanotype contact prints hinged in, the location and date of each penciled in on bottom right of each print/page. The book includes a sharpened 7H Eagle graphite pencil, turquoise in color, in a fabric loop at the top of the book. Ruwedel's souvenirs of Egypt are photos of modern and contemporary structures where Egyptian architectural motifs have been
  - 8] See: Mark Ruwedel. One Thousand Two Hundred Twelve Palms. New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2010.

quoted (usually Art Deco). But the book as "souvenir" also makes ref erence to 19th-century expeditionary photographers using the cyanotype process, the notebook with its pencil a reference to the note taking and sketching they performed. MRu.42.2016

ALBUMS (viewed by Ruwedel as collections, not unique projects/artists' books themselves)

Span (not dated). Unique. 11" × 8". Thirty-six photographs.

Black pebble hardcovers, with title in white letterset on spine, title page with title in letterset and photographer's signature. Consists of thirty-six gelatin silver prints mounted on the recto of each page via four print corner slits cut into the page, with the title (name of railroad) penciled in at the center of the facing verso. "Drawn from the "Westward the Course of Empire" project (which documented 131 railroad lines), Ruwedel selected photographs where the remnants of a railroad abutment, trestle, or support suggest where one end of a bridge or some sort of "span" once existed." Yet the notion of "span" (as a verb or noun) is denied as there is no means by which spanning can actually occur, except in memory or projection. 9 See also Tunnel (n.d., MRu.491.2016) and Campsite (2002, MRu.41.2016). MRu.880.2016

### RELATED PORTFOLIO STUDIES

- \* Homage to Walker Evans / Bethlehem, PA (1982). Unique. Eleven photographs. A group of eleven loose gelatin silver prints (all 8"x10" from 4"x5" negatives) with a folded map of Bethlehem, PA (Ruwedel's home town) marked in red with the locations of where both Walker Evans and Ruwedel photographed. This re-photographic project, inspired by Evans's classic 1935 work for the Resettlement Administration (later the Farm Security Administration), served as the research component of Ruwedel's program requirements for his MFA degree from Concordia University (1983). MRu.39.2016.1-11.
- # Photographs along the Bozeman Trail, 1988 (1988). Unique. 14.5" × 11.5". Seven photographs.

Linen cased portfolio with cover board (with ink-stamped date, "JUL 04, 1988"), title board with mounted map (Montana/Wyoming area of the Bozeman Trail, Little Big Horn River), and seven mounted gelatin silver prints (each ~ 7" x 9"). Two prints are mounted facing on a folding board to create a panorama view of the Custer battlefield site. The mats are numbered in order in pencil, 1-6, with the locations also identified in faint pencil lettering below the images, which later became typical in Ruwedel's matted presentations. MRu.991.2016

9] See: Mark Ruwedel and Jock Reynolds. Westward: The Course of Empire. New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2008.

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RUWEDEL, MARK, and Jock Reynolds. Westward: the Course of Empire. New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2008.

## GUEST EDITOR

JON EVANS is the Chief of the Library and Archives at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where he has spent the last 28 years of his career as a librarian, book buyer, and bookseller. During his tenure he has organized more than two dozen book exhibitions, covering topics as disparate as post-war Japanese photobooks, interactive artists' books, the illustrated Shakespeare, propaganda and the photomontage, arts manifestoes, and Warhol's printed works. Mr. Evans served as a library consultant to the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas and as a member of The Printing Museum's Collections Management Committee. He has also been an active member of the Art Libraries Society of North America for more than two decades, serving as President of the Society in 2012 and as President of the Texas-Mexico chapter in both 2003 and 2016.

## CONTRIBUTORS

PETER BLANK became the first Photography Curator in Stanford Libraries Special Collections in 2018. Since his arrival, Peter assisted in Stanford's designation as the future home of the Arthur Tress and Mark Ruwedel photography archives. He received his B.A. from Indiana University in Fine Arts Studio where he studied with Henry Holmes Smith and Reg Heron, received his M.L.S. from Indiana University, was conferred an M.A. in Art History from Hunter College, and completed additional graduate work (ABD) in the Ph.D. program in Art History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. As an art librarian he has worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, and Stanford University. At Stanford Libraries he helped build a strong photography research collection which includes historic photobooks, limited edition photobooks with prints, and portfolios.

DEIRDRE DONOHUE is the Managing Research Librarian at the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs of the New York Public Library. In over three decades in New York City Deirdre has been a librarian at the International Center of Photography (ICP) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, an educator at Pratt Institute's Information School and ICP/Bard's MFA Program, and is a practicing artist. She served as guest editor of Aperture magazine's Photobook Review 014 in 2018 and has contributed texts to a variety of publications, most recently to Bookdummies: An Imaginary Studio, a Non-stop Process, 1995-2015 by Victor Sira. Deirdre is on the Board of 10x10 Photobooks and the Advisory Board of the Penumbra Foundation.

TONY WHITE is the Florence and Herbert Irving Associate Chief Librarian, Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Prior to this he was Director of Decker Library, Maryland Institute College of Art, and before that, Head of the Fine Arts Library, Indiana University Bloomington. He has published extensively, including articles, catalogs essays, and book chapters on artists' books, artists' publishing, and topics in art librarianship, while curating artists' books exhibitions at numerous institutions. His board service includes the Center for Book Arts (NYC), the Kinsey Institute, and as a founding board member of the College Book Art Association. He is also a founder of the Contemporary Artist's Books Conference (NYC), and served on the editorial board of the Journal of Artist's Books. Since 2018, he has taught The History of Artists' Books Since 1950 at UVA's Rare Book School.

ANNE WILKES TUCKER is the curator emerita of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, having, in 1976, become the founding curator of the photography department for which she acquired 30,000 photographs made on all seven continents. She curated or co-curated over 40 exhibitions, most with accompanying catalogues, including surveys on the Czech Avant-garde, the history of Japanese photography, and the history of war photography. She has also contributed articles to over 150 magazines, books and other catalogues and has lectured throughout the North and South America, Europe and Asia. Her numerous honors, fellowships, and awards include being selected as "American's Best Curator" by Time Magazine in 2001 in an issue devoted to America's Best. She has been a trustee of FotoFest since 1990 and the Philip and Edith Leonian Foundation since 2016 and served as a trustee of Randolph College between 2008-2018.

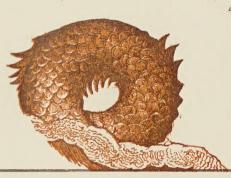
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